predominantly Italian, though according to the historian Paolo Sarpi the ascendancy of Italian bishops was remarked upon, an ascendancy which was often obtained by pressure and negotiations on the part of the Holy See with the interested parties or the Italian princes. This comes out particularly well in the negotiations between Pius IV and Cosimo de' Medici. In exchange for putting pressure on the Tuscan bishops to participate in the council and vote in the papal sense, and in spite of his bitter jurisdictional and financial disputes with the Tuscan clergy, Cosimo obtained special political favours from the pope; and so did Alfonso d'Este.

Like all the Italian policy of the Holy See, that of this period has from that time to this been interpreted by Catholic historians as an 'Italian policy', one, that is, which favoured the 'liberty' of the Italian states, peace in the peninsula, the Italian 'nation' and 'people' – in fine, the 'national unity' of Italy. The latest writer to hold this view is the Italian historian, Professor Pontieri, in an important work which covers the same period and problems as are dealt with here.[1] He also asserts that its rigorous and energetic pursuit of Catholic reform and Counter-Reformation enables the papacy to claim 'the indisputable merit of having saved the religious unity of the Italian nation in an age which proved the precursor of so much disaster for the church and for Italy'. And he remarks: 'In this unity Italy, though subject to the foreigner, found herself and in the fullness of time was to achieve the foundations and the crowning glory of her political unity.' In reality, things happened rather differently and not without a struggle. Of this the men of the Risorgimento, from Mazzini to Cavour, were well aware, though one must make allowances for the distortions and simplifications of politicians writing history. The 'crowning glory', as Croce explicitly and sometimes rhetorically observes, harked back to those very movements which the activities of Catholic reform and Counter-Reformation, by dint of the papacy's alliance with Spanish power, succeeded in suppressing.

1 E. Pontieri, 'Gli ultimi aneliti della independenza italiana,' in *Nei tempi grigi della storia d'Italia* (1949).

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because of the well-founded fear that the emperor would be blamed for his soldiers' unchristian behaviour. Ferdinand petitioned his brother for investiture with the duchy of Milan, which would have created a huge, unbroken block of Habsburg territory from the Po to the Sudeten Mountains and the Carpathians. Both Ferdinand and Gattinara urged Charles to force the pope to summon a general council for the reform of all spiritual and secular conditions of the church and of Christendom. Worse still, there seem to have been some in the emperor's entourage who now talked of the actual abolition of the papacy as an institution. Nothing came of the more extreme proposals; Milan was enfeoffed to a Habsburg only in 1540, and then it was to Charles's son and not his brother; and the popes managed to postpone the meeting of the general council until 1545. But it is not surprising that the emperor could never induce the papacy to co-operate wholeheartedly in his policies, and this inability remained one of the major weaknesses in his position.[1]

The very existence of Charles V's empire – the uniting of a number of countries under the rule of one person – thus raised problems which the individual countries either would not have had to face at all, or, as the histories of France and England demonstrated, would have had to face in a much more tractable form. Added to these difficulties was the unprecedented problem of governing this diverse collection of states. In the last analysis, the empire of Charles V existed only in the person of the emperor. It was not even called an empire. That name was reserved for the old Holy Roman Empire, here distinguished by a capital letter from the empire of Charles V, a term which should be clearly understood as a purely modern designation; when Charles V's contemporaries used a collective name for his dominions at all, it was *monarchia*. There was much confusion in the minds of contemporaries as to the significance of the term Holy Roman Empire, now that it had suddenly acquired such a powerful head. To Gattinara, at least, it was clear that the personal union of the states of the empire must be matched by a functional union. By training and experience, Gattinara belonged to the school of Roman lawyers, mostly natives of Franche-Comté, who had helped the dukes of Burgundy to weld the Netherlands into a functional union by the establishment of the councils and courts through which they governed the provinces.[2] His authority as Burgundian grand chancellor was now extended to cover all of Charles's dominions. The Council of State, the only one of the councils to which great nobles were admitted and which advised the emperor on all

1 I wish to thank Dr Thomas Fröschl and Dr Alfred Kohler for drawing my attention to these points and to the documentation of Ferdinand's and Gattinara's proposals in 1527.
2 Below, pp. 481, 485.

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imperial matters, was extended to include Spanish and Italian members, as well as the Burgundians. Characteristically, Gattinara saw his emperor as legislator for the whole world, 'following the path of the good emperor Justinian', reforming the laws and simplifying legal procedures, so that all the world would want to use them and that 'it would be possible to say that there was one emperor and one universal law'.

Nothing came of this vision. Nor did anything come of Gattinara's plan for a treasurer-general to whom the treasuries of all the emperor's dominions should render account. After Gattinara's death and the abolition of his own office of grand chancellor, the other all-Imperial institutions regressed even from the very modest level they had attained. The central control of the empire became more and more a matter of personal control by Charles and those advisers whom he chose to consult on any particular issue. The enormous amount of paper work (of which only some parts have been published) was handled by two distinct institutions: by a Spanish secretariat of state, continuing traditions inaugurated by the Catholic kings and responsible for the affairs of Spain, Italy and the Mediterranean; and a French secretariat, based on Burgundian traditions and responsible for all affairs north of the Alps. The old German Imperial chancellery continued to function independently in purely technical matters, but politically it was dependent on the French-Burgundian secretariat. Inevitably, these developments led to a great increase in the power of the secretaries of state. Both the Spanish secretary, Francisco de los Cobos, and the French-Burgundian secretary, Nicolas Perrenot, seigneur de Granvelle, another Franche-Comtois, were men of great ability; but neither their functions nor their personalities made their position and influence comparable to those of Gattinara before 1530.

More than ever Charles, and Charles only, represented the empire. He governed it like the head of one of the great sixteenth-century merchant houses where the junior members of the family served as heads of the foreign branches of the firm. There were great advantages in having members of the Habsburg family as governors-general, regents or even kings in his dominions. They were locally more acceptable than even the greatest nobles of non-royal blood and much less likely to be involved in local feuds; their employment as his personal representatives accorded with Charles's own views of the central role of the dynasty in his whole position. The Netherlands, the Empire and Spain after 1529 were always, at least nominally, entrusted to a Habsburg or his consort. Only for the Italian dominions had non-royal viceroys to be appointed. In the event, the emperor's policy proved a success. His family served him loyally and, in the persons of his two governors-general of the Netherlands, his aunt Margaret of Austria (1518–30) and his sister Mary of Hungary (1531–55),

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with more than common skill and devotion. Even so, there was frequent friction between the members of the family. Their correspondence shows that all were concerned with the empire as a whole; yet, inevitably, each saw its needs from the angle of his or her specific charge. Each thought, at times, that two of the others were ganging up against them or were leaving them in the dark about important decisions. Ferdinand especially, threatened as he was by the awesome power of the Turks and the wilful policies of the German princes, came to distrust Charles as early as the early 1530s[1] and in 1552 deliberately failed to support his brother against the attack of Maurice of Saxony.[2]

If Charles V trusted his governors and viceroys and if he, unlike his morbidly suspicious son, Philip II, was prepared to keep them in office for decades and uphold them against local opposition, he yet reserved the ultimate control over policy and over the administration entirely to himself. He and his secretaries were in weekly correspondence with his governors. Despite the delays caused by the enormous distances the couriers had to travel; despite the emperor's notorious tardiness in taking decisions; despite the frantic appeals of governors and generals for fuller powers to cope with an emergency – despite all these difficulties, the emperor insisted on taking all important decisions himself, relying only on those counsellors who were travelling with him on his constant journeys from dominion to dominion. The system achieved the control he desired, but at the cost of lost opportunities and great inefficiency. Once, at least, during the revolt of the Comuneros, it came near to ruining his power in Spain.[3]

Apart from the regular political correspondence, the viceroys and governors were bound by the instructions they received when they entered upon their office. They had to follow the advice of the privy councils which Charles appointed for them. He reserved all important appointments to himself, and the administration of any one of his dominions was therefore never the governor's administration but always the emperor's. In his political testament of 1548 he counselled his son not to let his viceroys usurp more authority than he had given them; while Philip should not believe all complaints which were levelled against them, he should never fail to listen to such complaints so that governors should not become absolute and his vassals despair of obtaining justice. It was sound advice, followed fairly and reasonably by Charles himself, but was later pushed to extremes of suspicion and duplicity by Philip II.

1 *Die Korrespondenz Ferdinands I*, vol. III: *Familienkorrespondenz 1531 und 1522*, ed. H. Wolfram and C. Thomas (1973–84).
2 Cf. below, pp. 373–4.
3 Below, p. 359.

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The emperor was determined to keep control not only over public appointments, but also over all other forms of patronage. He had the reputation of being slow to reward service; but a minister or a servant could always hope that, in the end, he would be given a *grazie* or *merced*: an ecclesiastical benefice, a title, a pension, a castellanship or one of the host of minor offices and sinecures with which the emperor could make a man rich without loss to himself. Great lords and ministers were willing to serve the emperor in the hope of such rewards, and lesser men, in turn, attached themselves to the lords and ministers. Viceroys and governors, sometimes even provinces and cities, had their agents at the emperor's court to represent their interests by a judicious distribution of gifts among councillors and secretaries. Some of these grew rich. Cobos, so Charles himself thought, did not take presents but had received many *mercedes* and desired more. The younger Granvelle, who succeeded his father as one of the emperor's principal advisers, was not above taking presents, though he liked to appear to refuse. The Granvelles, father and son, were reputed to have accumulated property to the value of a million ducats.

The position of Charles as the dispenser of all patronage explains much of the passionate longing of his subjects to have him reside within their particular country. As patronage had been Cisneros' most important problem before Charles's first visit to Spain, so it remained a key problem of all his viceroys and governors. Margaret and Mary, in the Netherlands, were given lists of persons to whom, and to whom only, benefices and offices were to be allotted in strict order as they fell vacant. In vain Margaret protested. She could not obtain the support she needed for the emperor's service if she could never reward those who supported and worked for her. Her reputation, she said, had suffered badly when such appointments and grants as she had made had been revoked by the emperor. In the end, she pleaded at least to be allowed to dispose of a third of the benefices. But the emperor refused even this request.

Undoubtedly, the emperor's policy was effective in concentrating political control over his dominions in his own hands, but it remained a constant source of grievance to his subjects and made the work of his governors extraordinarily difficult. The subjects will more readily obey the prince himself than his governor, wrote his sister Mary at the end of twenty-four years of this experience, for, however much good sense the latter has, he is not as useful to them and hence there will always be a greater number opposing than assisting him.

The emperor's failure to develop a non-personal institutional organisation for his empire was not, however, the result only of the very personal view he took of his office, but also of the attitude of his different dominions. He was no Alexander or Napoleon who had conquered his empire, but the hereditary and legitimate ruler of each of his states whose

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laws and customs he had sworn to maintain. The Sicilians prided themselves on their voluntary allegiance to the house of Aragon and alarmed the Spaniards by dark hints of another Sicilian Vespers, should their privileges not be observed. The Spaniards maintained that the title of king of Spain was better than that of emperor of Germany and desired Charles not to use this latter title when he was in Spain. The Germans were particularly suspicious of foreign troops, and their fear that the emperor was arranging the 'Spanish succession' of his son was one of the main reasons for his loss of authority in Germany at the end of his reign. The Netherlanders, the original architects of his empire, resisted even attempts to bring their own provinces into closer union. In 1534 the governor-general proposed to the States General a defensive union with regular financial contributions from each of the provinces for a standing army. The proposal was rejected; 'for if we accept the project', the States General said, 'we shall undoubtedly be more united, but we shall be dealt with in the manner of France', that is, lose our liberties. The particularism of the emperor's dominions was a fight not only against centralisation but also against autocracy. While Charles seized all opportunities which presented themselves to strengthen the Crown's authority in each of his dominions, he never attempted a full-scale attack on the liberties of his subjects in any of them. Any attempt to create an imperial administration would have been regarded as just such an attack.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising that Charles failed to develop an economic policy for his empire or even to conceive of an economic unity of his dominions in the way in which contemporary rulers of single states were beginning to think of the economic unity of their kingdoms. In this field, as in others, only Gattinara understood the full implications of empire. He had proposed a common imperial currency. But nothing ever came of this proposal.

The emperor's policy in economic matters consistently followed the line of least resistance, a line determined by vested interests, local traditions and the overriding financial necessities of the imperial government. The monopoly of the oceanic trade was, indeed, firmly upheld; but, characteristically, it was reserved to the Castilians. Yet Castile was quite unable to provide the manufactures which the Spanish colonists overseas demanded. So far from taking advantage of the excellent colonial market which paid for its imports in solid gold and silver, the Castilians were alarmed at their own exports to which they ascribed the high prices in their kingdom. The Cortes of 1548 even petitioned for a prohibition of exports to the Indies, now that the colonists should have had sufficient time to build up their own industries. It was the very reverse of a mercantilist or imperialist attitude. The emperor did not accept this petition; nor did he accept an earlier one (1542) for the prohibition of the export of all raw

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stories as myths. The conservative 'ulama' demanded his dismissal from his university post, but the affair merely served to increase his popularity with students and liberals, and the book, which the author had been forced to withdraw, was reissued in revised form the following year (1927) under the new title *Fi al-adab al-jahili.*[18]

By this stage, a number of literary groupings had begun to emerge, distinguishable by the predominant literary influences on their work. One group, of whom the most prominent members at this stage were Haykal and Taha Husayn, was mainly influenced by French romantic literature; a second group, led by 'Abbas al-'Aqqad and Ibrahim al-Mazini, drew mainly on the English tradition. This dichotomy often reflected differing educational patterns: both Haykal and Taha Husayn, for example, had studied in Paris, while 'Aqqad and al-Mazini (the leaders of the so-called "Diwan Group") were graduates of the teachers' training college in Cairo; another member of the same group, 'Abd al-Rahman Shukri (1886–1958), had studied in England, at Sheffield University. A third group – more radical than either of these, and heavily influenced by the writings of the Syrian Christian Shibli al-Shumayyil – was represented by Salama Musa, Isma'il Mazhar, and others; drawing on the theories of Darwin and Freud, these writers adopted a rationalist position, exalting western culture and rejecting Islamic values. This extremism is also apparent in Salama Musa's attitude to traditional Arabic style, which he held to be inferior to English or French.[19]

Whether because writers were preoccupied with political questions, or because they lacked the skills necessary to master the novel, over a decade passed before Haykal's *Zaynab* found a successor in Muhammad Farid Abu Hadid's first historical novel, *Ibnat al-mamluk* (1926). This represented a significant advance on the less sophisticated efforts of Zaydan, although it was not until the later 1930s that the historical novel began to achieve maturity. The year 1926 saw also the beginning of an autobiographical tradition with the publication of one of the best-loved works of modern Egyptian literature: the first part of Taha Husayn's *al-Ayyam* (published serially in 1926–27 and in book form in 1929), which offered novelists not only psychological insight into an Egyptian country childhood but also a prose style of exemplary clarity. Two further parts of *al-Ayyam* followed, and Taha Husayn also produced a series of novels, beginning with *Du'a' al-karawan* (1934), but his importance lies rather in his contribution to the intellectual and educational development of twentieth-century Egypt than in his fiction *per se.*[20]

[18] See P. J. Vatikiotis, *The Modern History of Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (Baltimore and London, 1969), 300ff.; Pierre Cachia, *Taha Husayn* (London, 1956), 59–60.

[19] See Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, 248ff.; Vatikiotis, *Modern Egypt*, 302ff., etc.

[20] For Taha Husayn, see Cachia, *Taha Husayn.*

The increasing popularity of the novel at the beginning of the 1930s is reflected in the institution of a novel-writing competition, won by Ibrahim al-Mazini's *Ibrahim al-katib* (1931). Despite the author's protestations, the title is an obvious pointer to its partly autobiographical content, and in this respect the work set a precedent followed by many Egyptian writers during the following decade. The work revolves around the writer Ibrahim's relations with three women – a Syrian nurse, his cousin Shushu, and the more westernized Layla – and may be seen as exemplifying the social plight of the contemporary Egyptian intellectual, caught between tradition and modernity; unfortunately, although the work is marked by some nice touches of humor, it is also marred by weaknesses both of characterization and of plot, and by an excessively egotistic outlook – to the extent that it has been described as a novel of self-praise (*fakhr*).[21]

Although al-Mazini went on to produce further novels, including a sequel to *Ibrahim al-katib* entitled *Ibrahim al-thani* (1943), the most significant novel of the early 1930s was probably Tawfiq al-Hakim's *'Awdat al-ruh*, published in two parts in 1933. Begun in French during the author's period of study in Paris, this work marked the beginning of a new realistic trend in Egyptian literature, and was closely modeled on the author's own experiences in Cairo during the period of the First World War. The work depicts the life and frustrated loves of an Egyptian family of the period, culminating in the 1919 popular revolt that for al-Hakim represented the "Return of the Spirit." It is this ending that has been responsible for the novel's "nationalist" reputation, attracting the admiration of, among others, the Egyptian president 'Abd al-Nasir. Like many of the author's works, however, the novel may be read on several levels: long sections in the second part are devoted to a debate about the nature of the Egyptian fallah, whom al-Hakim regarded as directly descended from the builders of the pyramids; but the work may also be read as a novel of adolescent love, or simply for the picture it gives of life in contemporary Egypt. Despite its many faults – most notably the tendency to rambling digression that marks many of al-Hakim's works – the work epitomized the new spirit of Egyptian patriotism and continues to strike a chord in the hearts of many Egyptians to this day.[22]

Al-Hakim's *'Awdat al-ruh* was followed by three further novels, in all of which the autobiographical element plays a significant part. The most successful of these, *Yawmiyyat na'ib fi al-aryaf* (Diary of a Country Attorney, 1937) derives from the author's experiences in the Egyptian Delta and presents a damning picture of conditions in the countryside and of the legal system based on the Napoleonic Code with few concessions to the

[21] See Hilary Kilpatrick, "The Egyptian Novel from *Zaynab* to 1980," in Badawi (ed.), *Modern Arabic Literature*, 223ff.

[22] See Paul Starkey, *From the Ivory Tower: A Critical Study of Tawfiq al-Hakim* (London, 1987) esp. 84–92.

mentality of the fallahin to whom it was being applied; the novel's particular combination of well-directed social criticism and assured literary technique has seldom been surpassed in modern Arabic literature.[23] Inferior from a literary point of view but of more significance in terms of general trends, is *'Usfur min al-sharq* (Bird of the East, 1938). Although published later, this derives from an earlier period of al-Hakim's life, and explores conflicts between east and west through the eyes of Muhsin, an Egyptian student in Paris who is clearly closely modeled on al-Hakim himself. Although artistically flawed, the work marks an important step in the development of the east–west theme, anticipated in the nineteenth century in such works as al-Tahtawi's *Takhlis al-ibriz ila talkhis Bariz* (1834–35), and subsequently developed in a series of novels by writers not only from Egypt but also from other parts of the Arab world. Despite the importance of al-Hakim's novels for development of the genre, however, his main interest lay in the theater rather than the novel, and after *al-Ribat al-muqaddas* (The Sacred Bond, 1945), which paints a picture of an "ivory tower" intellectual, he produced no more full-scale works of this kind.[24]

To this stage in the development of the Egyptian novel belong also the efforts of Mahmud Tahir Lashin, whose one novel, *Hawwa' bila adam* (Eve without Adam, 1934), touches on themes of class conflict and the emancipated woman's search for new forms of relations with men; and 'Abbas Mahmud al-'Aqqad's *Sara* (Sarah, 1938), the sole contribution to the genre of one of the leading literary figures of the first half of the twentieth century. By the beginning of the 1940s the novel was both beginning to claim for itself a new status (reflected in the institution of a novel-writing competition in 1941) and to be marked by a number of new directions. A new generation of novelists, taking its cue from the corruption of Egyptian politics in the inter-war period rather than from the optimism of the 1919 revolution, was beginning to produce works characterized by a new realism.[25] Paradoxically, this trend was accompanied by a new enthusiasm for historical subjects, set either in the pharaonic or in the pre-Islamic or early Islamic historical period. At the same time. the period saw a rise in a type of "popular" novel, exemplified most obviously in the works of Ihsan 'Abd al-Quddus, in which romantic love – not untouched by sensationalism – plays a major part; although despised by more serious writers, works of this type have accounted for a large proportion of the output of Egyptian fiction in this and succeeding periods, as well as providing ready material for the growing Egyptian film industry.

[23] *Ibid.*, 140–53. The novel is available in an English translation by Abba Eban, *The Maze of Justice* (London, 1947; new ed., with foreword by P. H. Newby, London, 1989).

[24] See Starkey, *Ivory Tower*, 53–56, 108–18, etc. *'Usfur min al-sharq* is available in an English translation by R. Bayly Winder, *Bird of the East* (Beirut, 1967).

[25] See Kilpatrick, "Egyptian Novel," 232ff.

Among the writers who produced historical novels set in ancient Egypt was the future Nobel prize winner, Najib Mahfuz [Naguib Mahfouz]; but although he had planned to embark on a series of historical novels, he soon redirected his attention to contemporary Egypt, producing a series of works set in various quarters of Cairo which explore the search for new values in the changing society of contemporary Egypt. This series of novels culminated in the monumental *Thulathiyya* (Trilogy, published in 1956–57, but written before the 1952 revolution), which lovingly chronicles the life of a lower-middle-class Egyptian family and the transition from a traditional to a more modern way of life, in the period between the two world wars. A hint of the turbulent period on which Egypt was about to embark is given at the end of the novel, when the two brothers Ahmad and 'Abd al-Mun'im go their separate ways, one to the left wing of the Wafd, the other to the Muslim Brothers.[26]

In the meantime, the short story – whose length gave it advantages over the novel in terms of ease of publication in newspapers and journals – had also been developing rapidly. As in the nineteenth century, Egyptian literature continued to benefit from the exodus of Syrians from their native country. A crucial role in developing the genre was played by the Syro-Lebanese brothers 'Isa (d. 1922) and Shihata (d. 1961) 'Ubayd, who called for a new Egyptian literature that would depict the social and national life of contemporary Egypt in a realistic fashion.

The key role in the maturation of the Egyptian short story was, however, played by the Egyptians Muhammad Taymur (1892–1921) and Mahmud Tahir Lashin, and by Mahmud Taymur, the brother of Muhammad. Muhammad, who also played an important role in the development of Egyptian drama, had studied in France, where he had read widely in European literature. Like the 'Ubayd brothers, his view of the course that Egyptian literature should take was influenced by contemporary political developments, but although he played a key role in helping to shape the emerging genre, his influence was cut short by his early death, and it was left to others to bring the Egyptian short story to full maturity.

Muhammad's works were edited after his premature death by his brother Mahmud (1894–1973), who went on to become one of the most prolific writers in modern Egyptian literature, with more than twenty collections of short stories to his name. His name, like that of Lashin (1894–1954), is associated with the "Modern School" (*al-madrasa al-haditha*), a group of writers whose literary weekly *al-Fajr*, founded in 1925, played a key role both in widening the potential reading public for the short story and in developing a new literary sensibility appropriate for the period. Like other

[26] For Mahfuz, including details of the extensive secondary literature on his writing, see Rasheed El-Enany, *The Pursuit of Meaning* (London, 1993).

members of the school, he was influenced not only by the short stories of de Maupassant but also by Russian writers such as Chekhov and Turgenev, and his short stories were consciously rooted in the lives of "ordinary" Egyptians. Despite this, both his themes and his characterization remained somewhat limited, and it is to Lashin's stories (particularly his *Hadith al-qarya*, published in 1929) rather than Taymur's that the credit must be given for moving the Egyptian – and indeed, the Arabic – short story forward into a new, mature, phase of development. The importance of this story, which revolves around an educated narrator's visit to the countryside, lies not only in the assurance with which Lashin manipulates the narrative form (which incorporates a "story within a story"), but also in its perfect mirroring of the social and political dilemmas facing contemporary Egypt, caught in an unresolved conflict between traditional and modern values. Discouraged by the reception given to his work, Lashin abandoned writing at the end of the 1930s, but his short stories provided the starting-point for a new, realistic mode of narrative (brought to perfection in the works of Yahya Haqqi [1905–92]) that provided a counterweight to the growing number of lightweight, "sentimental" works in the genre.[27]

Meanwhile, the theater in Egypt had continued to revolve until the 1920s mainly around melodramatic productions, which often relied heavily on music for their effect. The presence of foreign troops during the First World War had introduced new varieties of western comic techniques to the Egyptian public, and a new kind of popular theater known as the "Franco-Arab revue" had been created by the Syrian-born 'Aziz 'Id. This style of theater had been further developed by the Egyptian Najib al-Rihani, much of whose material was adapted from the French vaudeville, but whose principal character, a village headman (*'umda*) named Kish-Kish Bey, was archetypically Egyptian. Serious critics scoffed at his technique, but his popularity remained immense.[28]

Despite the growing popularity of these forms of theater, and despite the large number of western plays translated by such men as Najib Haddad and Tanyus 'Abduh, few original plays of literary value had yet been written in Egypt, and the question of whether to use classical or colloquial Arabic for serious drama remained unresolved. Significant contributions to the development of the genre were, however, being made by Farah Antun, Antun Yazbak, and especially Muhammad Taymur, already mentioned in the discussion of the short story. Taymur's four comedies in colloquial Egyptian, written between 1918 and 1921, derived inspiration from a belief that to raise standards it was necessary to "Egyptianize" the theater, and to this end

[27] See Sabry Hafez, "The modern Arabic short story," in Badawi (ed.), *Modern Arabic Literature*, 270ff. For Lashin, see Sabry Hafez, *The Genesis of Arabic Narrative Discourse* (London, 1993), esp. 215ff.

[28] See Landau, *Theater and Cinema*, 86ff.

his dramas attempted to treat social and domestic themes of relevance to the Egyptian public, but they were unable to compete with the more popular entertainment provided by al-Rihani and others, and Taymur, discouraged, turned his attention from the theater to the short story.[29]

The next phase in the development of Egyptian theater was dominated by the figure of Tawfiq al-Hakim, who between 1921 and 1926 produced some six plays in colloquial Arabic for the popular theater of the 'Ukasha brothers. (An indication of the low status enjoyed by the theater at the time is the fact that al-Hakim was forced to write under the name "Husayn Tawfiq" to escape the attention of his family.) The plays were largely based on the traditional form known as the "operette," with music and songs playing a significant part, and in most of them al-Hakim followed the common practice of giving his play an Egyptian setting, even when adapting the work from a western original. The themes of two of the plays, however – *al-Dayf al-thaqil* and *al-Mar'a al-jadida* – combined the elements of comedy and melodrama with serious political and social comment, and as such point forward to the author's subsequent career.[30]

The social and financial base of the Egyptian theater in the 1920s remained a precarious one, and when al-Hakim returned in 1928 from studying in Paris he found many of his previous theatrical associates bankrupt. During the following six years, he produced some half-dozen plays in both colloquial and classical Arabic on a variety of themes, some of which suggest the influence of Pirandello and other contemporary western writers. The decisive date, both in al-Hakim's career as a writer and in the history of modern Arabic drama, was the publication of *Ahl al-kahf* in 1933. The play (based on the Qur'anic story known in Christian tradition as the sleepers of Ephesus) represented the first in a series of "intellectual" dramas of a type unprecedented in the Egyptian theater; clearly intended to refer to the contemporary situation of Egypt as it awakened from centuries of stagnation to face the challenge of the twentieth century, the work enjoyed a spectacular success, going through two editions in its year of publication. When the government-sponsored National Troupe was established in 1935, the company opened with al-Hakim's play. *Ahl al-kahf* was followed in 1934 by *Shahrazad* and a series of other "philosophical" plays in the same mold, and al-Hakim continued to dominate the Egyptian theatrical scene until well after the fall of the monarchy. Indeed, to him belongs the chief credit for making prose drama an accepted form of literature in modern Egypt. His eclectic approach to his art, and his willingness to draw on a variety of sources (Islamic, "popular," western, or classical), make classification of his work difficult; many of his plays were designed to be read rather than acted,

[29] For Muhammad Taymur, see Ed de Moor, *Un oiseau en cage* (Amsterdam, 1991).
[30] See Starkey, *Ivory Tower*, 22.

but despite his popular image as an "ivory tower" intellectual, his works often provide a mirror on developments in contemporary Egypt.[31]

The period between the two world wars that saw the coming to maturity of new narrative and dramatic forms was, in poetry, above all the period of Romanticism. It is impossible to consider the phenomenon of Romanticism in Egypt in isolation from other parts of the Middle East (or indeed, the Mahjar[32]), since developments spread rapidly throughout the Arabic-speaking world. A key figure in sowing the seeds of the new trend, however, was the Syrian-born Egyptian poet Khalil Mutran (1872–1949), whose first published volume of verse (*Diwan al-khalil*, 1908) included a preface in which he sought to distance himself from traditional Arab concepts of poetry by laying a new emphasis on the structural unity of the poem. Although Mutran's work is characterized by a new belief in the primacy of the individual artist, however, his subsequent poetry failed to develop the new trend to any significant degree, and it was left to the members of the Diwan Group – al-'Aqqad, al-Mazini, and 'Abd al-Rahman Shukri (1886–1958) – to bring the influence of the neo-classical poets to an end.[33]

The main influence on the poets of the Diwan Group (so-called after the critical work entitled *al-Diwan* by al-'Aqqad and al-Mazini published in two volumes in 1921) was English lyrical poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, it was probably less through their poetry itself than through their criticism that al-'Aqqad and al-Mazini played a significant part in changing the current of literary taste. Continuing Mutran's stress on the importance of the unity of a poem, they added a new emphasis on the importance of emotion and the need to write poetry that was the direct result of the poet's own experience. This trend was continued by the members of the Apollo Society founded in 1932, which centered around the periodical *Apollo*, founded and edited by Ahmad Zaki Abu Shadi (1892–1955). A loose association of poets whose membership stretched beyond the borders of Egypt, the Apollo Society was subsequently to form the core of the Romantic movement in Egypt, including 'Ali Mahmud Taha (1902–49), whose poetry (much of it set to music) achieved enormous popularity in the 1930s and 1940s, and Ibrahim Naji (1898–1953), whose

[31] See *ibid.*, 36ff., etc. In this respect, the series of plays on social themes originally published in the newspaper *Akhbar al-yawm* and subsequently reprinted in the collection *Masrah al-mujtama'* (1950) is particularly interesting. Unlike many Egyptian writers of his generation, Tawfiq al-Hakim had consistently refused to identify himself with any political party, arguing that a writer must maintain his independence to preserve his moral authority; his articles in the 1930s and 1940s took as their targets Egyptian politicians of all persuasions, and the plays of *Masrah al-mujtama'* echo this spirit in the context of Egypt after the Second World War – a time when, as the author points out in his preface, the country was again in a state of social turmoil.

[32] "Mahjar" is the name given to Arab émigré communities in North and South America.

[33] See Ostle, "Romantic Poets," 88ff.

love poetry represents a unique fusion of the classical Arabic and western romantic traditions. A particularly intriguing feature of Abu Shadi's own work is the number of poems inspired by paintings – an indication, as has recently been observed,[34] "of how universal the author intended the cultural mission of the Apollo Society to be." Similar manifestations of this liberal vision of Egyptian culture can be seen in the sculpture of Mahmud Mukhtar and the painting of Muhammad Naji.

Despite the desire of the Romantic literary critics to break away from classical Arabic poetic traditions, much romantic poetry continued to adhere fairly closely to traditional norms of meter and rhyme. In language and imagery, however, a revolution was under way. In the hands of the most gifted poets, the new trend produced a number of works in which a new lyricism and simplicity of language is deployed to considerable effect. At the same time, in the hands of less gifted poets, the introspection associated with the new style led to a host of publications in which the poet's isolation, feelings of nostalgia, and concepts such as *al-majhul* (the unknown) produce a sense rather of literary escapism.

To what extent the phenomenon of Arab Romanticism was a direct imitation of western Romanticism and to what extent it arose as a result of the political and cultural changes occurring in the Middle East in the period following the First World War is a question much debated. What is not at issue, however, is that Romanticism in a general sense perfectly mirrored the political realities of the age. The First World War had resulted in the dissolution of the Ottoman empire, and in Egypt (declared a British protectorate in 1914) nationalist sentiments had spilled over into widespread revolt in 1919. The search for new means of expressing an Egyptian identity provided a natural stimulus for authors to seek new means of expression, and the literature of European Romanticism – itself a product of the tension between the individual and the society around him – provided a natural focus for writers anxious to cast off the literary conventions that the neo-classicists had largely maintained. As the idealism of 1919 gave way to disillusion with increasing corruption as the various political parties maneuvered for power, the more escapist facets of Romanticism again must have mirrored the mood of many in the country.

The same factors responsible for the attractiveness of Romanticism in poetry and in other arts manifested themselves in a number of other intellectual debates during this period. The growth of political activity and awareness following the 1919 revolt had led to a continued increase in the importance of journalism, with individual parties trying to recruit distinguished authors to their daily or weekly papers. The "pharaonic" trend in

[34] See Robin Ostle, "Modern Egyptian Renaissance Man," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 57 (1944), 184ff.

Egyptian thought found perhaps its most eloquent exposition in Tawfiq al-Hakim's *'Awdat al-ruh* and *Ahl al-kahf*, but the Egyptian heritage, and the position of Egypt in the contemporary world, was more complicated than to yield to such simplistic, and potentially isolationist, theories, and a number of other important – and often contradictory – intellectual trends can be identified during this period. In his book *Mustaqbal al-thaqafa fi misr* (1938), for instance, Taha Husayn (who had been a professor of classical civilization) sought to demonstrate that Egypt had always belonged to a wider, Mediterranean civilization – in effect arguing that the future of Egypt lay with Europe rather than with Islam or the Arab world.[35] Equally important, perhaps, was the restatement of the Islamic heritage undertaken by such leading writers as Muhammad Husayn Haykal (in *Hayat Muhammad*), Ahmad Amin (in *Fajr al-Islam*, 1929–52), and indeed Taha Husayn himself (*'Ala hamish al-sira*). The process of intellectual rediscovery and reappraisal represented by these works had a more sinister counterpart in a number of social and political groupings that shared a belief in violence as a legitimate means for achieving their aims: these included not only groups such as *Misr al-fatat* (Young Egypt), whose popularity was comparatively short lived, but also the Muslim Brethren (*al-Ikhwan al-muslimun*), founded by Hasan al-Banna' in 1928, whose influence has continued into the post-1952 period.

Alongside these developments in "elite" culture, the inter-war period witnessed a parallel development in more popular forms of literary expression. Popular *zajal*-type[36] verse forms had served during the 1919 revolt to articulate nationalist sentiment, and a number of newspapers had been founded by *zajjals*, or employed "resident" *zajjals* as resident columnists. A curious, and particularly Egyptian, phenomenon was the appearance during the 1930s of some scores of spurious autobiographies, many in the colloquial and many purporting to be written by lower-class characters – thieves, prostitutes, and the like. The interplay of vernacular literature with contemporary social and political developments is nowhere better illustrated, however, than in the career of Mahmud Bayram al-Tunisi (1893–1961). Born in Alexandria into a family of Tunisian extraction, Bayram al-Tunisi began by composing poetry in the classical idiom for the Alexandrian press, but soon became aware of the advantages of more colloquial forms of expression as a medium for the development of political consciousness. Though banished from Egypt for most of the inter-war period for his political activities, he published much material in the popular-satirical press and popular arts reviews of urban Egypt during this period, as well as

[35] See Cachia, *Taha Husayn*, 77ff.

[36] *Zajal*: a term applied to a type of popular verse in strophic form. *Zajjal*: a composer of *zajals*.

contributing to the by now well-established Egyptian popular theater. From the early 1940s he was also engaged in production for newer forms of mass media which had begun to gain popularity in the country. From 1942 he collaborated with Zakariyya Ahmad in composing lyrics for the popular singer Umm Kulthum (d. 1975), whose songs – which married a subtle eroticism with a careful respect for Islamic propriety – represented a unique cultural phenomenon. Her concerts, records, and other activities made her immensely wealthy, but despite this she continued to hold the affection both of ordinary Egyptians and of Egypt's rulers, and her songs – which seemed to express the heart of the Arabs – became a rallying-point for Egyptian and Arab sentiment, especially at times of crisis and defeat. Like Bayram himself, Umm Kulthum also used the radio as a vehicle by which to reach a mass audience, as well as contributing to the burgeoning Egyptian film industry; the first films had been seen in Egypt as long ago as 1905, and the country had had a film recording studio since 1919. Although most films had been made with a view to financial reward rather than artistic merit, the industry was already beginning to play an important part in reinforcing the cultural hegemony of Egypt over other parts of the Arab world.[37]

Egypt after the Second World War (1945–95)

The course of Egyptian cultural life in the second half of the twentieth century again well illustrates the close relations between intellectual and political trends. The Second World War and succeeding events – in particular the creation of Israel in 1948 – heightened Egyptian awareness of the failure of the democratic experiment, and both intellectuals and the people generally began to turn to alternative philosophies to provide a way forward from the corruption of the current regime. Though the mass appeal of Marxism was limited by its atheistic foundations, the critic Luwis 'Awad (1914–90) had already published Marxist interpretations of English literature in Taha Husayn's review *al-Katib al-misri* and, more generally, radical thinkers such as Salama Musa had begun to stress the need for literature to promote socialist values in a language ordinary Egyptians could understand. These ideas found a ready response, not only among the emerging generation of writers including Najib Mahfuz, but also among established writers such as Taha Husayn himself. At the other end of the political spectrum, the Muslim Brotherhood was proving more attractive as a mass movement, combining a reputation for ruthlessness and violence with a wide-ranging program of schools, clinics, and welfare institutions that could not fail to attract increasing numbers of the Egyptian poor. The movement reached its high point during the Palestine war of 1948, when members distinguished

[37] For Bayram al-Tunisi, see Marilyn Booth, *Bayram al-Tunisi's Egypt* (Exeter, 1990).

themselves as volunteers and auxiliaries; banned in 1954 but later allowed to reemerge under Sadat, its presence (and that of other fundamentalist groups) has provided a somber backdrop to the cultural and intellectual life of Egypt in the subsequent period.[38]

To these overtly political influences must be added a third, more philosophical, trend whose effect on the course of intellectual life in post-war Egypt was considerable. This was the existentialist philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre and others, with its concept of *engagement* (translated into Arabic as *iltizam*), which was thrust into prominence in the Arab world in January 1953 with the publication in Beirut of the first issue of the literary journal *al-Adab*, whose editor Suhayl Idris loudly proclaimed its advocacy of "committed literature." Idris's call for commitment was followed by a series of debates in the Egyptian press and elsewhere about the meaning and implications of this concept, in some of which a "generation gap" began to emerge – al-'Aqqad and others defending a position that might crudely be described as "art for art's sake" – against a younger generation of "committed" writer and critics. Nor was the younger generation itself united: various shades of "commitment" are apparent, mingling the influences of Marxism, existentialism, and Arab nationalism, not to speak of other, more esoteric "isms" of one kind and another. From this point, however, the concept of "*iltizam*" was one that no Egyptian, or Arab, writer could ignore: "commitment" took over from Romanticism as the dominant mood of the period.[39]

The attractiveness of the concept of *iltizam* to Egyptian intellectuals was undoubtedly rooted in the particular combination of social and political factors prevailing at the time. In the same way as Sartre's *engagement* came to prominence in Europe largely as a result of the experience of the Second World War, *iltizam* struck a chord with an Egypt that appeared to have found a political way forward with the Free Officers' revolt of 1952 but that continued to suffer from seemingly intractable economic and social problems. In poetry, the change of mood had already been accompanied by major changes in form, as the first generation of post-Second World War poets began to experiment with various forms of "free verse" (in which the foot rather than the line is used as the basis of meter), under the influence of western poets such as Eliot and others. Although the first experiments along these lines took place mainly in Iraq, the new style quickly spread to Egypt and other parts of the Arab world.[40]

To the immediate post-war period belong some of the best-known novels of Najib Mahfuz (b. 1911), whose Nobel prize for literature in 1988 not

[38] See Vatikiotis, *Modern Egypt*, 329–30, etc.

[39] See Badawi, "Introduction," 21ff.

[40] On these developments, see Shmuel Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry 1830–1970* (Leiden, 1976); and esp. Salma Khadra al-Jayyusi, *Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1977).

only capped a literary career of astonishing length and variety, but also served to awaken many in the west and elsewhere to the achievements (indeed, to the existence) of modern Arabic literature. Like most Egyptian writers, Mahfuz was unable to support himself by writing alone for most of his career, and until his retirement in 1971 he served in a variety of government departments, including the General Organization for Film Industry, Broadcasting, and Television, the ministry of national guidance, and (ironically) the film censorship office. His first works were on historical themes, but he soon turned to contemporary Egyptian society for inspiration, and a series of "realistic" novels ensued, set in the quarters of Old Cairo: the novels (published between 1945 and 1949) are peopled with the colorful inhabitants of the Cairo backstreets and reflect the search for new moral values in a society whose foundations were looking increasingly shaky. This series of novels reached its highest level of achievement in *al-Thulathiyya*, whose characters reflect the changes in Egyptian society in the period between the two world wars: as in Mahfuz's earlier novels, a prominent theme is the search for meaning and moral certainty. Both in scale and in maturity, the work remains unique in Egyptian literature as a faithful mirror of this eventful period in the nation's life.[41]

Mahfuz's own reaction to the 1952 Free Officers' revolt was a curious one. Apparently feeling that the social problems that had earlier preoccupied him would be solved by the new regime, he stopped writing for five years until – his disillusion with 'Abd al-Nasir already apparent – he began writing *Awlad haratina*.[42] But his reaction of silence to contemporary events was not shared by the majority of Egyptian authors, and it was not long before the change of regime began to be reflected in Egypt's literary production. If one had to select a single work epitomizing the new mood of commitment and realism following the Free Officers' revolt of 1952, the most likely candidate would probably be 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sharqawi's (1920–87) *al-Ard*, first published in 1954 and recently described as "arguably the most widely known work of modern Arabic fiction both inside and beyond the Near and Middle East."[43] (The work is in fact probably better known to the average Egyptian through Yusuf Shahin's popular film version than through the book itself.) In the course of the novel, which is set in the early 1930s during the dictatorship of Isma'il Sidqi, two main struggles are acted out between the oppressed inhabitants of a Delta village and the authorities: in the first, an attempt is made to deprive the villagers of the water needed for irrigation; the second revolves around the local land owner's scheme to build a new road to his estate across their land. In the

[41] See El-Enany, *Pursuit of Meaning*, 70ff.
[42] Trans. as *Children of Gebelawi* by Philip Stewart (London, 1981).
[43] Robin Ostle, introduction to *Egyptian Earth*, trans. Desmond Stewart (London, 1992).

course of the narrative al-Sharqawi gives us a vivid picture of a number of village "types" – schoolteacher, smallholder, *'umda*, imam; the realism of the description is considerably enhanced by the use of dialogue in vigorous colloquial. From a formal point of view also, the novel is of considerable interest, for while the first and third sections are narrated by a schoolboy returning from Cairo to the countryside for his summer holidays, the central section reverts to a more conventional third-person narrative. Although writing of events during the 1930s, al-Sharqawi was almost certainly expressing an unspoken fear about the future course of developments under the Free Officers' regime – the use of historical analogies to comment on contemporary developments being observed also in writers belonging to the so-called "generation of the sixties."[44] This technique represents an obvious but often effective device for evading the attentions of the censor – a factor that has had to be taken into account by Egyptian intellectuals at almost every point during the period under discussion.

Although al-Sharqawi went on to write three further novels, he never repeated the success of *al-Ard* in articulating the brief period of optimism that followed the Free Officers' revolt of 1952. The trend toward "realism," however, was not confined to the full-scale novel. Among short-story writers, even members of the older generation such as Muhammad Taymur and Yahya Haqqi felt compelled to reflect the new political reality in their published work. At the same time, a new generation of writers was emerging whose work – often spanning more than one literary genre – seemed at times almost to have been written with the intention of providing the new regime with an agenda for action.

Among this generation, Yusuf Idris (1927–91) is perhaps the outstanding figure. Widely acknowledged as one of the most talented of modern Arabic short-story writers, Idris – who originally trained as a doctor – also wrote several novels and made important contributions to the development of the drama. His first collection of short stories, *Arkhas layali* (The Cheapest Nights, 1954), was an immediate success, and four more collections followed over the next few years, each marked by the same concern for the underprivileged (particularly the peasants of the countryside), by a keen eye for the foibles of human behavior across a wide social spectrum, and by a unique blend of colloquial and standard Arabic.[45]

In drama, the mood of optimism and need for social reconciliation following the 1952 revolution found an early echo in Tawfiq al-Hakim's *al-Aydi al-na'ima* (1954), an essentially light-hearted play that nonetheless contains a strong element of social criticism in its repeated emphasis on work rather than wealth as the basis for social order. *Al-Aydi al-na'ima* was

[44] For these see below, pp. 418ff.

[45] See P. M. Kurpershoek, *The Short Stories of Yusuf Idris* (Leiden, 1981).

followed by other works whose relevance to contemporary Egypt could not be doubted. In *Izis* (1955), for example, al-Hakim discusses the age-old philosophical question of means and ends against the background of the Ancient Egyptian myth of Isis and Osiris, concluding (in a phrase well suited to the political mood of the moment) that judgment in such matters belongs to the people alone. The setting of *al-Safqa* (1956), by contrast, is a contemporary one, revolving around the attempt of a group of peasants to secure a land deal in the face of almost unsurmountable difficulties; the language of the play represents an attempt to solve the dilemma of classical vs. colloquial Arabic by employing a simplified "third language" which can be read either way.[46]

Although these linguistic experiments and gestures toward "commitment" on the part of Egypt's foremost dramatist undoubtedly reflected the spirit of the age, the tone of al-Hakim's plays remained generally conciliatory. During the same period, however, a more impassioned, even angry, generation of playwrights was beginning to make its mark. The new mood was heralded by the appearance in 1956 of Nu'man 'Ashur's *al-Nas illi taht* (The People Downstairs), which combined social criticism with a strong element of popular comedy. The play, which enjoyed a considerable success, was followed by *al-Nas illi foq* (The People at the Top, 1957), representing a powerful and almost wholesale condemnation of the old Egyptian aristocracy, and by *'A'ilat al-dughri* (1962), in which the author uses the break-up of a middle-class Egyptian family to symbolize the disintegration of society in post-revolutionary Egypt. Written only ten years after the Free Officers' revolt of 1952, the play provides a vivid illustration of how quickly the optimism engendered by the change of regime had given place to disillusionment.[47]

Nu'man 'Ashur's plays are among the first manifestations of what has sometimes been called the "new wave" of Egyptian dramatists – a group that also includes, among others, Lutfi al-Khuli, Alfred Faraj, Sa'd al-Din Wahba, and Yusuf Idris (already mentioned as a short-story writer). Although each of these playwrights retained his own particular literary stamp, they shared a number of characteristics that spanned both the political and literary spheres. Almost universally "committed" politically (to the extent, in some cases, of having been imprisoned for their views), they had no hesitation in using colloquial Arabic for their plays. Taking their cue from the more general nationalistic mood, a number of them (including even the conservative al-Hakim, in *Qalabuna al-masrahi*, 1967) were consciously attempting to mold a specifically Egyptian drama, and to relate their work to older forms of Egyptian theatrical activity, for example by introducing the

[46] See Starkey, *Ivory Tower*, 34, 174–75, etc.
[47] See Badawi, *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt* (Cambridge, 1987), 140–48.

traditional Arab story-teller into their plays. At the same time, they were acutely aware of theatrical developments in the west, including not only the "committed" theater of Sartre, Brecht, and others, but also the dramatists of the so-called "theater of the absurd," whose principal exponents were Beckett, Ionesco, and Artaud.[48] In this respect the eclectic Tawfiq al-Hakim – despite belonging to a previous generation – again provides a convenient barometer of contemporary trends: *Ya tali' al-shajara* (1962), for example, despite the derivation of the play's title from an old Egyptian peasant song, employs the dramatic techniques of Beckett and Ionesco; by contrast, *al-Ta'am li-kull fam* (1963) is characterized by a didactic, Brechtian tone.[49]

The development of Egyptian drama during this period was undoubtedly helped by the new regime's recognition of the theater's potential as a vehicle of propaganda. Indeed, the late 1950s and early 1960s have been widely seen as one of the most creative periods in Egyptian theatrical history. The establishment of the General Foundation for Theater, Arts, and Music in 1960 was followed by the setting up of several new theaters and theatrical troupes; increasingly, theatrical activity was linked to the comparatively new mass medium of television, which was not only producing its own plays but also screening the works of new dramatists originally written for the theater. At the same time, the regime was making conscious efforts in other ways to bridge the gap between the "elite" culture of the Europeanized theater and the ordinary Egyptian – for example, by arranging provincial tours of contemporary dramatic productions.[50]

If Nu'man 'Ashur's plays *al-Nas illi taht* and *al-Nas illi foq* deserve the credit for launching the "new wave" of the 1950s, the mood of the following decade is perhaps best epitomized by Yusuf Idris's *al-Farafir* (1964), which the author claimed represented an example of a truly Egyptian drama. In a series of articles in the literary periodical *al-Katib* Idris had stressed the need to break down the barriers between actors and audience and to forge links between the modern theater and traditional Arab forms of dramatic entertainment, including the shadow theater (*karagöz*)[51] and the social gathering known as the *samir*. Despite this theorizing, the play itself probably owes more to contemporary western dramatic techniques than to traditional Arab forms of entertainment. It begins with the author addressing the audience to introduce his main character Farfur (a made-up name, translated as "Flipflap," and intended to symbolize the average Egyptian), and the action revolves around the relation between Farfur and his master, whose actions become increasingly arbitrary as the play proceeds. The play

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] See Starkey, *Ivory Tower*, 34ff.

[50] Badawi, *Modern Arabic Drama*, 140ff.

[51] The principal character in the Turkish shadow-play, and also the shadow theater itself. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., s.v. "*Karagöz*," by P. N. Boratov.

raises fundamental questions about the nature of power and the structure of society, implying that the division between rulers and ruled is an unalterable one; it ends with Farfur spinning dizzily around his master, as he desperately tries to make sense of his own situation. Whatever one's views on Idris's theorizing, *al-Farafir* remains an important landmark in the Egyptian theater, for its combination of dramatic qualities (not least its typically Egyptian humor), its social and political commitment, and its ability at the same time to raise wider questions of the meaning of human existence; although Idris went on to write several more plays, many with political and social overtones, he never surpassed the dramatic achievement of *al-Farafir*.[52]

As a broad generalization, it may be said that although Egypt has been in the vanguard of most cultural developments in the Arab world since the Second World War (including not only the novel, short story and drama – literary forms of largely western inspiration – but also the newer media such as film and television), in poetry other parts of the Arab world have been more innovative. As already noted, the main formal poetic developments of the late 1940s and early 1950s took place in Iraq; while more recently, much of the most original poetry in Arabic has been produced by poets of Lebanese or Syrian origin. That is not to say, however, that Egyptian poetry has been isolated from trends either in other literary genres or in other parts of the Arab world. The early poetry of Salah 'Abd al-Sabur (1931–81), in particular, not only owes much to the formal experiments of the Iraqis al-Sayyab, al-Mala'ika, and the like, but also epitomizes in verse the social commitment so much in vogue in the mid-1950s not only in Egypt but also in other parts of the Arab world. In *al-Nas fi biladi* (1954), for example, he presents a picture of a collection of simple villagers listening to a tale told by his uncle Mustafa; the tale starts the villagers wondering about the meaning of life, and about the Angel of Death who sends the soul of the rich man tumbling down to the depths of hell; but when the narrator returns to the village, he finds that it is Mustafa who has died in the year of hunger. Written in a language that deliberately aimed to bridge the gap between classical diction and the more everyday language of the people, 'Abd al-Sabur's poetry encountered fierce resistance from some critics, but he continues to be regarded by many as the foremost poet of post-war Egypt.[53]

Although the 1952 revolution had engendered a brief mood of optimism widely reflected in the cultural productions of the Arab world, the Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel set the seal on a mood of disillusion that was already becoming widespread, as it became clear that the ideals of the

[52] Badawi, *Modern Arabic Drama*, 153ff.

[53] See Salma Khadra al-Jayyusi, "Modern Poetry in Arabic," in Badawi (ed.), *Modern Arabic Literature*, 158ff.

revolution were not being realized. The growth of bureaucracy, the increasing involvement of the state in all areas of life, and the imposition of state censorship on the press and other publications had all had the effect of curtailing creative experimentation. For much of the 1950s and 1960s, most Egyptian intellectuals were either employed by the ministry of culture or worked for one of the state-controlled newspapers and were thus, in effect, state employees – an arrangement that suited the authorities, since it enabled them to neutralize those with "awkward" views. The state's recognition of the value of the arts as a propaganda tool had indeed had some positive effects (e.g., the creation of new theaters); but other contemporary developments, including the increasing standardization of education and the rewriting of school textbooks, were leading to a culturally impoverished generation regarded by Egyptian intellectuals such as Taha Husayn as practically illiterate.

As before, although political events were to give birth to a distinctive new group of literary voices, the mood of the moment was already reflected in the works of established writers such as Najib Mahfuz, whose novels from *al-Liss wa-al-kilab* (1961) to *Miramar* (1967) may be seen as an increasingly pointed series of protests at the direction the new regime was taking. As befits a novelist of Mahfuz's stature, none of the novels is *solely* a work of political protest: most also contain elements of wider metaphysical and existential concern, and *Miramar* in particular is technically innovative. Nonetheless, read in a purely Egyptian context, the novels provide a graphic literary counterpart to the more prosaic account of the loss of faith in 'Abd al-Nasir's regime provided by Tawfiq al-Hakim in his *'Awdat al-wa'y* (1974). Significantly, perhaps, Mahfuz (who had earlier stopped writing altogether for a period following the 1952 revolution) wrote no more novels after the Six Day War until 1972, though he continued to produce short stories.[54]

If the 1950s and early 1960s belonged to the dramatists, the period following the 1967 defeat is perhaps most obviously associated – at least so far as "elite" culture is concerned – with a group of writers (predominantly novelists and short-story writers) generally known as the "generation of the sixties." Like the "new wave" dramatists, these writers shared a number of characteristics, both of attitude and experience. Politically committed and more outspoken than their predecessors, many had already been imprisoned for their views. In contrast to the positive commitment of al-Sharqawi's generation, however, the characteristic mood of the new writers is one of rejection, disillusionment, and self-doubt. Consciously searching to redefine the role of the writer in society, their works are characterized by a rejection of the past and a desire for a new beginning; at the same time, while drawing

[54] See El-Enany, *Pursuit of Meaning*, 99ff.

freely on western modernist techniques, many have also been aware of the creative possibilities of folklore, and of forms derived from the Arabic literary tradition. The group of intellectuals associated with this new movement gathered around a literary and cultural magazine, *Gallery 68*, which appeared in eight issues between 1968 and 1971 under the editorship of, among others, Idwar al-Kharrat (b. 1926), himself one of the most innovative writers of his generation, as well as a prolific translator.[55]

The credit for producing the first work of the new trend is usually given to Sunʿ Allah Ibrahim, whose novella *Tilka al-raʾiha* appeared in 1966; banned in Egypt, it reappeared two years later in an edition from which passages containing political criticism or sexually explicit material had been removed. (The complete text was only published in 1986, in Morocco.) The work, which is autobiographically based (the author had been released from jail in 1964) is an early example of so-called *adab al-sujun* ("prison literature"), in which the sense of alienation is at times almost overpowering: the narrator, who has been released from prison on parole, leads a humdrum existence, restlessly moving from place to place in Cairo as he visits friends and relations, recording the minutiae of his daily round and sexual encounters in a language stripped of all but the barest essentials. When he learns of his mother's death, he betrays no emotion.[56]

Tilka al-raʾiha, which attracted considerable criticism not only for its political outspokenness but also for what Yahya Haqqi described as its "flawed sensibility,"[57] was followed in 1974 by a full-length novel, *Najmat aghustus* (a satirical account of the construction of the Aswan high dam), and in 1981 by his most successful novel, *al-Lajna*. Here again, Ibrahim uses irony to considerable effect. The narrator in *al-Lajna* receives an order from the Committee to write an account of the most eminent contemporary Arab personality, but before he can record his findings, he is condemned to terminate his own life by eating himself. The work, which continually juxtaposes the narrator's straitjacketed situation with the Committee's assurances that he is free, represents one of the most powerful attacks on dictatorship published in the modern Arab world. *Bayrut, Bayrut* (1984), on the Lebanese civil war, though less successful, is of interest as one of relatively few examples of an Egyptian novel set elsewhere in the Arab world. Ibrahim's later novel, *Dhat* (1992), returns to the environment of Cairo, treating the commercialization of the 1980s and 1990s in a satirical manner; the title of the novel ("self" in Arabic, but also containing an allusion to the princess Dhat al-Himma[58]) is itself enigmatic, and the author

[55] See Kilpatrick, "Egyptian Novel," 258ff.

[56] See Samia Mehrez, *Egyptian Writers between History and Fiction* (Cairo, 1994), 39ff.

[57] *Ibid.*, 44.

[58] A mythical princess and heroine of a popular Arabic romance, which relates her exploits in the Byzantine wars of the early ʿAbbasid period.

Pierre Belon (1517–64) and the Englishmen John Caius (1510–73) and William Penny (*c.* 1530–88). The explanation of their activity must be sought partly in religious devotion, partly in aesthetic appraisal, partly in sheer curiosity; it was generally accompanied by massive learning. For these men were scholars even more than they were observers and collectors – and the undisciplined urge to collect marvels produced strange results at this time, as in Aldrovandi's own museum. Compiling from almost every respectable author, their grasp was not satisfied by biological considerations of morphology and habitat but extended to philology, legend, proverb and dietetics. They rejected some, though not all, of the medieval fabrications of the crocodiles'-tears and barnacle-goose kind; they assembled the beginnings of a corpus of sound information on animal species. This was the greatest achievement of these so-called 'encyclopaedic' naturalists – combined with their efforts towards procuring realistic representations of the creatures they described. Graphically, however, the zoological writers were less successful than the botanical. The tally of the immense variety of living and moving things was begun, but to the sterner scientific disciplines of classification and embryology, comparative anatomy and physiology, the sixteenth-century naturalists contributed little new. They were certainly far from replacing Aristotle.

The situation in botany was more promising and ripened more swiftly. Herbal lore was an essential element in medical art, and in knowledge of authorities and field experience a few medieval herbalists had maintained a scientific tradition. The early printed herbals initiate no new trend; again a new phase begins late, and in the north rather than in Italy. Its commencement is generally assigned to the publication of Otto Brunfels's book (1530) because Brunfels, though unremarkable as a writer, had the good sense to employ an artist to make illustrations from actual specimens. Leonhart Fuchs's herbal (1542) is even more imposing – it is outstanding as a work of art – in that Fuchs was a man of deep learning and wide experience. Yet his work, like that of many of his successors, shows a utilitarian rather than a scientific mentality in its author. Of intrinsic biological problems he – and they – seem largely unaware; his horizon was limited to recognition and medicinal usefulness. Many other herbals, Latin and vernacular, illustrated and unillustrated, were published in the following half century, the pioneer English contribution in this new vein being John Gerard's (1597). All were modelled, directly or indirectly, on Dioscorides; plagiarism was common, and printers bought or stole each others' woodcut blocks.

In the latter part of the century collectors were extending their range widely and intensively over western Europe, and even to the New World and the East. Fuchs described maize, Gerard the common and the sweet potato, Matthias de l'Obel tobacco, and naturalists were eager to establish

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